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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 USNATO 000411

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SUBJECT: SEPTEMBER 17 HLTF REAFFIRMS NATO SUPPORT FOR U.S.
EFFORTS TO FIND CFE SOLUTION WITH RUSSIA BASED ON THE
PARALLEL ACTIONS PACKAGE; ALLIES ASKED FOR VIEWS ON WAY
AHEAD, INCLUDING DECEMBER CFE DATA EXCHANGE

REF: STATE 95492

Classified By: Deputy POLAD A. "Hoot" Baez for reasons 1.4(B)&(D).

¶1. (C) Summary: During the September 17 HLTF meeting and related consultations the previous day, Allies welcomed the U.S.'s detailed readout of A/S Rose Gottemoeller's September 3 discussion of CFE with Russian Disarmament Director Antonov and expressed interest in the new ideas that were informally discussed at the meeting. U.S. Rep Rich Davis indicated that in light of Antonov's continued failure to engage in a problem-solving way on CFE, the U.S. was considering at a senior level what our next steps should be, and invited Allied input. He explained that Antonov had proposed a formal U.S.-Russian bilateral meeting at the end of September, but the U.S. had demurred, preferring first to take stock with Allies and in Washington. He noted that one specific issue Allies need to consider is how to handle the December CFE data exchange: two years out from Russia's suspension, it was fair to ask whether NATO Allies should continue to provide data, while Russia does not. No Ally suggested it would be a good idea not/not to provide data, and Turkey and Norway said Allies should continue to do so. The Chair agreed that this question would be on the agenda of the next meeting, which is scheduled for October 29.

¶2. (C) Summary continued: All Allies who addressed the question of the way ahead focused on four common themes: CFE is worth preserving and the Parallel Actions Package--which Allies labored hard to agree--is the "only game in town" to find a way forward; a unified NATO position is paramount; the U.S.-Russia dialogue is the modality most likely to develop a CFE solution, but that multilateral engagement between the U.S., Russia, and a small, self-selected group of Allies is potentially valuable, and; delaying multilateral engagement with Russia is appropriate if the timing is not right for results-oriented negotiation, as long as CFE stays on the political agenda. Some Allies, particularly the Turks, have clear ideas on next steps; many Allies appear to believe that Moscow has not reached a conclusion about whether and under what conditions it wants to keep CFE. In response to extended discussion of and some confusion about the ideas Gottemoeller raised informally with Antonov, the U.S. offered to circulate a paper to Allies that described the concept of trial implementation and how it differed from the Russian proposal for provisional application. End Summary.

¶3. (C) Comment: It seems clear that Allies are unwilling to

surrender ground on principles like host nation consent or the flank, and have not considered alternatives to the present course: engaging Russia, demonstrating flexibility within the Parallel Actions Package and waiting for Russia to decide whether it is interested in negotiating seriously on this basis. The new German HLTF Rep, for example, made clear in private comments to the U.S. that Germany is not thinking about how to find a way out of CFE and to a new agreement, but rather of how to get A/CFE into force. It is also notable that a number of Allies were represented by new or substitute officials during a period of transition (including the UK, Germany, Romania), which may have decreased the robustness of discussion. End Comment.

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Debriefing U.S.-Russia Bilats
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14. (C) U.S. Rep Davis briefed Allies in detail, per Ref A, on A/S Gottemoeller's September 3 discussions of CFE with Antonov. He described the idea Gottemoeller had advanced informally, of combining a period of trial implementation of Adapted CFE with agreement on a specified timeline for ratification of the Adapted Treaty by NATO Allies. He distinguished this idea, which was focused on getting Russia to resume Treaty implementation, from Russia's concept for provisional application of the Adapted Treaty once a majority of CFE states had ratified. He underscored that Gottemoeller had made clear to Antonov that ratification of the Adapted Treaty by the U.S. and many others was impossible while Russia's suspension persisted. Gottemoeller had also made

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clear that this set of steps - a specific timeline for ratification combined with trial implementation of Adapted CFE by Russia and others - if agreed would become an integral part of the Parallel Actions Package and would be considered only in the context of agreement on all the elements of the package.

15. (C) Davis said that Antonov had not rejected this idea, but had focused instead on Russia's own ideas for provisional application and, more importantly, on the flank. Antonov had made clear that "ratification is not enough." Antonov elaborated clearly and unambiguously on the language of the Russian aide-memoire which cited the flank as an issue that needed to be resolved as a "precondition" for any deal that would be acceptable to Moscow. He asserted repeatedly that legally binding limits on Russian forces within Russian territory needed to be dropped in order to make agreement on the parallel actions package possible. Davis noted that questions relating to a definition of substantial combat forces, Georgia, and Moldova had also been discussed in familiar terms, but that the flank and ideas relating to provisional application, trial implementation, and ratification had been the core of the discussion. He said that Gottemoeller had been disappointed by this Russian response. She had urged Antonov to view the updating of CFE as a process that would begin before entry into force of Adapted CFE, and continue beyond it. Gottemoeller said that not all issues could be addressed before Entry into Force (EIF). The flank issue, which is critically important for NATO Allies, was among those that we envisioned discussing after EIF.

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Allies' Reaction
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16. (C) Trial Implementation and Provisional Application: Several Allies expressed appreciation for this "latest U.S. effort" to come up with a creative way forward. Either in the plenary or on the margins, some Allies (Turkey, Czech Republic, Romania, Norway, Canada) expressed reservations about such an arrangement, in particular voicing concern about the implications that any trial implementation

arrangement would have for other elements of the Parallel Actions Package, such as the flank, Georgia, and Moldova (a view likely held because they did not understand that it would be an integral part of an agreed parallel actions package). Most Allies who spoke on this set of issues, both in the HLTF and on the margins, expressed varying degrees of confusion about the distinctions between Russia's provisional application, and the U.S concept for trial implementation as part of a CFE package deal.

-- Romanian Acting Rep Barbulescu said that her government could not consider provisional application at all; Romania's constitution had changed since 1992, when the original CFE Treaty was provisionally applied. She asked what trial implementation would portend for Georgia and Moldova, and was reassured that those issues would need to be resolved as part of the package that included trial implementation.

-- Turkish Rep Ahmet Gun's concerns were clear and his language was precise. Like Romania, he was concerned that trial implementation, in the absence of a deal on Georgia and Moldova, would betray basic NATO principles on host nation consent (the point was also raised by Norway. U.S. Rep emphasized again that Georgia and Moldova solutions would remain part of the same package deal that triggered trial implementation). Privately, Gun said he opposed trial implementation of data and verification elements of Adapted CFE, without including the flank, indicating that this would suggest that the flank was no longer part of the Treaty.

¶7. (C) In the full HLTF and on the margins, members of the U.S. team sought to make clear that the U.S. idea for trial implementation was to get Russia implementing CFE again and thus help create the basis for ratification of Adapted CFE by NATO Allies; the Russians appeared to have in mind that Allies would ratify Adapted CFE whether or not Russia was

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implementing the Treaty. To help clarify the concepts, while also making clear that the U.S. had discussed an idea in order to gauge Russian interest, and had not made a formal proposal, U.S. Rep offered to put an explanation on paper and circulate it to Allies through the IS. This was warmly welcomed. (Comment. It is clear that Allies want to digest this idea before reaching a conclusion about whether it has merit or should be pursued further. End Comment.)

¶8. (C) A specified timeline for ratification: No Ally commented explicitly on the idea of establishing a specified timeline for ratification. However, nearly all who spoke to aspects of this issue underscored that ratification would simply be impossible unless there was agreement on the parallel actions package, and Russia had resumed implementation.

¶9. (C) Flank limits: Turkey and Norway made clear in bilateral meetings on the margins that elimination of the flank was a non-starter for their governments. Several other Allies, notably Italy, which is otherwise very flexible on addressing Russian desiderata, expressed irritation that Russia continued to insist on a maximalist position with regard to this issue. Italy asserted that Russia needed to decide whether or not it wanted CFE and the rigorous approach it represents, as well as the commitment to cooperative security the Treaty epitomizes.

-- Ahmet Gun reiterated a point he has made previously: his Parliament would not ratify A/CFE without the flank provisions. Privately, he made clear that Turkey would oppose ideas for trial implementation that suggested the flank was no longer part of the Treaty. In response, U.S. team explained that Gottemoeller had made clear to Antonov that all three core elements of CFE were important -- limitations, verification, and data exchange -- but that in a trial, we hoped for constructive ambiguity: all the CFE states would affirm their support for the Treaty as a whole,

but agree as a gesture of goodwill to begin trial implementation, for a specified period, of key operational provisions.

-- Reassured, Gun postulated, on a personal basis, that Turkey might be able to come up with some language for the parallel actions package that would give voice to this creative ambiguity. He underscored that for this deal to work, Russia could not say publicly that the flank had been eliminated, and Turkey could not say that the flank would last forever. He appeared to have in mind language for the parallel actions package that would state explicitly that Russia had won agreement to review the flank provisions after the Adapted Treaty entered into force.

No Ally hinted at the question of whether Allies should be prepared to consider a deal where CFE's legally binding flank limits are converted into political commitments.

¶10. (C) December Data Exchange: In the HLTF itself there were only a few comments on the question of the December data exchange. None suggested it would be a good idea for NATO not/not to continue to provide data: Turkey, Italy, Norway said that NATO needed to continue to maintain the high moral ground on CFE. Gun was explicit: the fact that December marked two years of Russian non-implementation was "of little importance." What was important was to save the Treaty. A failure to exchange data would be a step in the CFE "funeral procession." The HLTF agreed to return to this discussion in October.

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Allied Ideas on the Way Ahead
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¶11. (C) Discussion of the way ahead took place in light of the U.S. debrief in the HLTF. However, it was plain both in meetings on the margin and in the full HLTF on 9/17, that Allies were not particularly surprised, nor discouraged, by continued Russian rigidity on the key issues. A number of Allies focused on the potential utility of a meeting between

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Russia, the U.S. and a self-selected "expanded group" of Allies (which they rely upon the U.S. to arrange). Allies remain interested in this idea, and most view it as second, after the U.S.-Russia bilateral channel, in terms of potential value to get CFE on track. Most are open to the idea of a NATO-Russia discussion of CFE, which would involve all Allies, but are under no illusions that an NRC(ACE) meeting would be productive given likely Russian representation.

¶12. (C) Turkey: The extensive U.S.-Turkish bilateral meeting September 15 was detailed and substantive. Gun introduced his successor (Tusel) and expressed appreciation for A/S Gottemoeller's briefing of Amb Sensoy in Washington. Turkey was open to a U.S.-Turkish bilateral meeting in Ankara, but timing is a serious concern because of their impending personnel changes. He asked if the team would be led by A/S Gottemoeller and seemed interested to learn if there would be political level representation. Gun expressed strong support for U.S. efforts to work creatively with the Russians as the best potential way forward on CFE. Initially wary of the trial implementation idea, he was reassured when U.S. team made clear that it would only occur in the context of an acceptable deal on the parallel actions package as a whole. Gun's comments on the flank made clear that Ankara is thinking about a way to offer Russia an olive branch on the flank, essentially via a public commitment to review the continued application of the flank limits after entry into force.

-- In terms of the way ahead, Gun was obviously disconcerted by the U.S. suggestion that the U.S. did not believe timing was favorable for an expanded group meeting with Russia, and

by the idea that NATO Allies should consider whether to fulfill CFE's annual data requirements in December. He was not surprised that Russia was not prepared to close on a deal; his prescription is that NATO should remain patient, active, and unified. He said he could envision the following benchmarks for CFE in fall:

- U.S.-Russia Bilateral meeting
- U.S.-Russia-Selected Allies meeting
- U.S.-Turkey bilateral meeting
- Possible Turkey-Russia bilateral meeting.
- Data exchange in December

¶13. (C) Romania: Apart from concerns about provisional application, the substitute Romanian representative appeared to be firmly in the mainstream of Alliance thinking: continue to engage Russia on the basis of the parallel actions package. Romania said it would have to conduct an interagency review on the data exchange question and examine the possible consequences of this action. The Romanian rep implied that a trial implementation arrangement could be acceptable, but we would need to think through the implications of having multiple versions of CFE subject to implementation.

¶14. (C) Canada: Canadian Rep Poupart said Canada was ready to accept a "pause" in expanded group engagement with Russia on CFE if Russia is not ready to move ahead. She reiterated familiar, widely-held Allied concern that continued Russian refusal to offer any compromises in order help find a way ahead on CFE is the core problem. She said that Allies cannot offer more on substance until Russia has taken a serious step toward meeting NATO's concerns. She said Canada will join consensus on the December data exchange, but because Canada has no forces in Europe, Ottawa does not feel it has standing to take the lead on this issue.

¶15. (C) Quad: With a substitute UK Rep and a new German HLTF Rep at the meeting, discussion at the French-hosted HLTF Quad meeting was desultory. Support for continued U.S.-Russia engagement was the main theme. The French and U.S. teams underscored the need to consider how CFE will be addressed in the context of the December Ministerials, particularly in light of the separate (but related) Corfu process.

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Bilats and Contacts

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¶16. (C) An extensive tour de table involving most Allies in the HLTF revealed that a majority had been demarched by Russia in July on Moscow's ideas for provisional application of Adapted CFE. Many said explicitly that they had deferred substantive comment until the questions raised by the Russians could be discussed among Allies. A few expressed an interest in discussing whether Allies should consider coordinating their responses to specific questions raised by Russia. Other Allies (GE, NO, CA) questioned whether Russia's proposal was a sincere effort to move things forward or a tactic to test the firmness of the Alliance position.

¶17. (C) The I.S. reported that in early August Russia had indicated that it would like to discuss A/CFE within the NRC format; however, subsequent interactions with the Russian Mission at NATO had resulted in mixed signals about the possibility of a CFE discussion in the NRC or NRC ACE. Most Allies who commented on this agreed that if Russia requested such a meeting, NATO should agree to it provided that the agenda was well-prepared, substantive and balanced.

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Next Meeting

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¶18. (U) The next HLTF is currently scheduled for October 29.
DAALDER